“The whole thing here is the organization. Whatever we accomplish belongs to our entire group, a tribute to our combined effort. Look at Disneyland. That was started because we had the talents to start it, the talents of the organization. And our World’s Fair shows—what we did was possible only because we already had the staff that had worked together for years, blending creative ideas with technical know-how.” -- Walt Disney

As we reflect upon the past academic year and look forward to the 2017-2018 year ahead, I want to use this newsletter to celebrate the accomplishments of our faculty, post-docs and students individually and to take seriously the words of Walt Disney, about whom I’ve been writing this summer, to take note of the role of our “combined efforts” in forming a community of scholars who critically examine visual culture and its social and material forms and practices across time and place. Understanding the power of visual communication has been a leading edge of interdisciplinary inquiry in the transformation of the humanities in the last two decades and there is no place better than Los Angeles, in the shadow of the Magic Kingdom, to be asking such questions despite the fact that they go back as far as Plato’s cave.

It may be provocative to cite Walt Disney. Invoking him may be seen as too “Mickey Mouse” for a research institute comprised of award-winning scholars, (please see the list below). It may send the wrong message of a seeming endorsement of a large corporation, its founder, etc. This is not my point. It is that at some point Disney assembled a team and they did something for which they had to invent a name: “Imagineering” described as imaginative concepts in design, architecture, engineering and entertainment. It was interdisciplinary; it happened in a lab-setting, it involved talented people with different expertise doing things they were not originally trained to do, working together. Some ideas dead-ended or were short-lived, others are still floating in endless circulation in Disney parks on several continents. But first they did it and then they named it. Without being grandiose, I can say that the VSRI and the VSGC has been doing this for some time now, although we have yet to “name” it. This is why it is important to review what we have done (and we keep very good record on our website (https://dornsife.usc.edu/vsri) because I can say we are as good as the faculty who assemble for discussions and seminars, and the students who join and also stay to complete the Graduate Certificate and then generate tomorrow’s new research.
To support this, we were able to hire, finally, our first dedicated full-time half-time staff person, Dr. Jennifer Miller, as the VSRI’s Associate Director, and this year, Danielle Charlap, a graduate student in Art History, will serve as the program’s RA, which is now also a regular position.

In other news, we are happy to announce that WJT Mitchell, Gaylord Donnelley Distinguished Service Professor at The University of Chicago, will join us for the next three summers to teach a seminar in a joint VSRI Getty Research Institute Initiative. In Summer 2018, Mitchell will teach VISS 501 (students will get credit for the VSGC Certificate) at the Getty beginning July 24 for 5 weeks. Please contact Jennifer Miller if you are interested in taking this class as soon as possible, including changing your registration from this Fall 2017 to Summer 2018.

I’m delighted to say that I will be on leave beginning January 2018 until January 2019 to take up my Guggenheim Fellowship and complete my book, Jet Age Aesthetics: The Glamour of Media in Motion. Although I will remain as VSRI Director, Professor Nancy Lutkehaus will begin as Director of the VSGC from Fall 2017. Nancy has been a member of our initiative’s Steering Committee from the start and we are thrilled she is assuming this new leadership role, which will include teaching VISS 599, Picturing the Pacific: Visual Studies in the Wake of Bernard Smith’s “European Vision and the South Pacific,” in Spring 2018 on Wednesdays from 2 to 5pm. This course studies the impact that cross-cultural contact between the west and the cultures of the Pacific Islands have had on the visual arts of both regions. It begins with a focus on the artists who accompanied Captain James Cook’s on his three voyages to the Pacific and ends with a focus on contemporary indigenous performance artists and photographers living in New Zealand and abroad and includes a nod to Gauguin, Walt Disney, and Renzo Piano in between.

The 2017-2019 VSGC Director

Nancy Lutkehaus is Professor of Anthropology, Political Science and Gender Studies in Dornsife College. She did her graduate work at Columbia University and taught at NYU before coming to USC. In addition to directing the Visual Studies Graduate Certificate program, she is Co-director of the Center for Visual Anthropology and is co-organizing the Royal Anthropological Institute’s ethnographic film festival at USC in March 2018. She is a former editor of the Visual Anthropology Review, the author of Margaret Mead: The Making of an American Icon (2008) and Zaria’s Fire: Engendered Moments in Manam Ethnography, Papua New Guinea (1995), and co-editor of Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice, Gender Rituals: Female Initiation in Melanesia, and Sepik Heritage: Tradition and Change in Papua New Guinea.

VSRI Associate Director and 2017-18 VSRI Graduate Assistant

Jennifer Miller is the Associate Director for the VSRI and the Graduate Advisor for the VSGC. After completing a dissertation on representations of burlesque theater in American art and visual culture, she received her Ph.D. in Art History from USC in 2010. She has worked for Los Angeles Modern Auctions and LACMA and was a contributing author for A Handbook of California Design: 1930-1965 Craftspeople, Designers, Manufacturers (2013).

Danielle Charlap is a doctoral student in Art History and a participant in the VSGC. Her research focuses on 20th and 21st century design and craft, as well as the history of collecting and exhibition practices. Recent projects have involved Jet Age design, television history, and interior design instruction. Danielle holds a BA in History from Harvard and an MA in Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture from the Bard Graduate Center. Prior to starting at USC, Danielle was the Associate Curator at the Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York.
Looking Back: Academic Year 2016-2017

In 2016-2017 we were extremely busy. Daniela Bleichmar and Vanessa Schwartz directed a Mellon Sawyer Seminar, “Visual History: The Past in Pictures.” Additionally, we continued our Contemporary Series and the USC-LACMA Photo Seminar and had grad-student specific workshops: the grant-writing workshop and the dissertation writing group.

Mellon Sawyer Seminar
The core programming for Visual History: The Past in Pictures was comprised of six workshops involving 19 invited speakers and a two-day symposium with presentations by four invited speakers, and three Mellon fellows.

The three Mellon Fellows were Dr. Allan Doyle (Ph.D. in Art History, Princeton, 2016), our full-time, one-year postdoctoral fellow, and our two pre-doctoral fellows, Randal Meissen (early modern history, USC Dornsife College) and Aaron Rich (film history, USC School of Cinematic Arts) who worked closely with the directors to coordinate the many details of the seminar events, create an extensive seminar bibliography, and develop a website that served as a resource for seminar participants and will continue to serve as a resource for future scholarship (http://mellonsawyervisualhistory.vsri.org/). In addition, the three fellows each researched and wrote an article-length essay about visual history and presented their work at the symposium.

MDA 599 in Spring 2017 was offered as a team-taught seminar attached to the Mellon Sawyer in which 18 graduate students enrolled and all students participated in the workshops and presented a short research summary at the symposium.

In addition to these activities, we held three large public events in Fall 2016 and Spring 2017, aided by internal funding from the USC “Visions and Voices” program. We brought to USC three “filmmaker-historians,” who presented their work and addressed, in conversation with invited discussants, what it means to be a “visual historian.” The events featured the legendary documentary director Frederick Wiseman; the independent director Tom Kalin, pioneer of the “new queer cinema”; and professor and BBC writer/presenter Amanda Vickery. These programs brought the themes and questions posed by the seminar to a broader audience that included undergraduate and graduate students, postdocs and faculty, as well as members of the public.

Contemporary Series
Suzanne Hudson organized four events over the course of the school year as part of the Contemporary Series. Susanna Newbury (University of Nevada, Las Vegas) presented on “Art and Real Estate in Global LA” in the fall. Later in the fall semester was an event in conjunction with the exhibit “Doug Aitken: Electric Earth” at The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA. In the spring, Sven Spieker (UCSB) discussed “Didactic Arts.” The 2016-17 series culminated with a viewing and discussion of “Moholy-Nagy: Future Present” at LACMA.

USC-LACMA Photo Seminar
In collaboration with Britt Salvesen, head of LACMA’s Wallis Annenberg Photography department, Jennifer Greenhill organized four photo seminars for 2016-2017, each led by a different scholar. The fall featured seminars on Edward Steichen with Anne McCauley (Princeton) and on photography of the Swahili Coast with Prita Meier (University of Illinois). In the spring, Estelle Blaschke (Université of Lausanne) delved into the history of microfilm, and Paul Martineau (The J. Paul Getty Museum) discussed his upcoming exhibit for the Getty on fashion photography.
Graduate Student Specific Workshops
In October, we held the CV and Grant Writing Workshop, which is designed to help graduate students from diverse disciplines prepare effective applications for fellowships and positions. Graduate students from all stages were invited to attend the morning CV workshops, and in the afternoon selected students worked in small groups with distinguished screeners Ed Dimendberg (School of Humanities, UC Irvine), Mark Braude (History and Art History, Stanford), Haidee Wasson (Critical Studies, Concordia U., Montreal), and Nancy Lutkehaus (Anthropology, USC).

Over the course of the 2016-2017 academic year the VSGC-CAMS Dissertation Group, led by Associate Professor of Cinema and Media Studies Laura Isabel Serna, met regularly to present and respond to work ranging from a dissertation prospectus to chapters of dissertations well on their way to being completed. The six participants hailed from Cinema and Media Studies, Art History, History, American Studies and Ethnicity, and East Asian Languages and Cultures. The dissertation group provides a structured, writing-focused space for VSGC students to receive feedback on work in progress and practice the art of constructive critique.

2017 VSGC Summer Grant Recipients

Emily Anderson, Art History
*Gold Leaf on Blue Paper: Printing the Bespoke Book in Early Modern Italy*

Melissa Chan, East Asian Languages and Cultures
*Choreographing the Sinophone Body: Martial Arts and Embodied Languages in Hong Kong Popular Media*

Harrison Diskin, History
*Alexander Lenoir’s “Sense” of the Past*

Lauren Dodds, Art History
*Collecting the Renaissance: The Samuel H. Kress Collection of Italian Art*

Grant Johnson, Art History
*Supple Materials: Sheila Hicks and the Matter of the Global*

Peter Labuza, Cinema and Media Studies

Natalia Lauricella, Art History
*The Limited Edition: Printing and Marketing for the Avant-Garde*

Randall Meissen, History

Joshua Mitchell, American Studies and Ethnicity
*The Prisoner’s Cinema: Film Culture in the Penal Press Before 1960*

Avigail Moss, Art History
*Actuarial Imaginaries of Art and Empire*
Faculty News

David Albertson contributed an essay titled “Before the Icon: The Figural Matrix of De visione Dei,” to appear in a forthcoming edited volume from Brill in 2018. He was invited to give a lecture at Notre Dame in November.


Jennifer Greenhill was awarded an NEH-Hagley Postdoctoral Fellowship on Business, Culture, and Society for the 2017-18 academic year to work on her book manuscript, The Commercial Imagination: American Illustration and the Materialities of the Market, 1890-1930. She published “Flip, Linger, Glide: Coles Phillips and the Movements of Magazine Pictures” in Art History (June 2017) and “A Dark Business” a commentary for the 30th anniversary issue of American Art (Summer 2017). She gave the Annual Findley Distinguished Lecture at Cornell in March 2016 and has more recently lectured in the U.K., Denmark, France, and Canada.

Julian Gutierrez-Albilla’s new book Aesthetics, Ethics and Trauma in the Cinema of Pedro Almodóvar was published by Edinburgh University Press in August of 2017.

Suzanne Hudson received an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation New Directions Fellowship for her research into the practical applications of art making. She will pursue coursework in Art Therapy, Psychology, and Medical Humanities while completing her book on the therapeutic origins of process within American modernism, Better for the Making: Art, Therapy, Process. She spent summer 2017 at a residency at Artspace, Sydney, during which time she also lectured at UNSW and the University of Auckland. Essays for the Museum of Modern Art and the National Gallery of Art, among others, are forthcoming. Her book, Agnes Martin: Night Sea (Afterall/The MIT Press), came out earlier this year.
Amelia Jones has been awarded a Fulbright grant to advance her research in art history and performance. For her Fulbright grant, Jones will travel to Auckland, New Zealand, from February through June 2018. She recently published “On Trans/Performance,” her edited special issue of Performance Research (October 2016).

Megan R. Luke has been promoted to Associate Professor with tenure. She is the recipient of an Alexander von Humboldt Foundation Fellowship for Experienced Researchers, which will allow her to conduct research in Germany for her current book, The Sculptural Surrogate: Reproduction and the Ritual Object, in multiple residencies over the course of 2017–19. In December, her co-edited volume, Photography and Sculpture: The Art Object in Reproduction will be published by Getty Publications. This book gathers together new research by sixteen leading scholars, and includes her essay, “Artificial Blindness: Objecthood and the Photography of Sculpture” on the work of Walker Evans and Albert Renger-Patzsch, and a major survey, “Reproductive Vision: Photography as a History of Sculpture,” which she collaboratively wrote with Sarah Hamill. Her article, “Our Life Together: Collective Homemaking in the Films of Ella Bergmann-Michel,” appeared in May 2017 in Oxford Art Journal, as part of an issue dedicated to feminism, domesticity, and the visual arts. Over the course of the academic year, Megan delivered lectures from different chapters of her current book at the Universität Zürich, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, and Emory University, and she was a speaker for the symposium, “The Figurative Pollock,” organized by the Kunstmuseum Basel and the eikones/NFS Bildkritik Institute. Closer to home, she presented on the László Moholy-Nagy retrospective at LACMA and the Schwitters Arp Miró exhibition at Hauser & Wirth for audiences from VSRI and beyond.

Nancy Lutkehaus is attending the Simposio Miguel Covarrubias: “Encuentros entre antropología, geografía y arte,” at the Instituto de Investigaciones Esteticas, UNAM in Mexico City the end of August to present “Pacific Rim Fusions: Miguel Covarubias/Visual Anthropologist of Pacific Cultures.” She has been appointed to the board of advisors for Cinepedia Ethnographica, a newly established international, open access, union catalog of ethnographic and folklore films held by national archives, university departments, museums, historical societies, educational distributors, and individual filmmakers.


Vanessa R. Schwartz published “Networks: Technology: Mobility and Mediation in Visual Culture” in American Art (Summer 2017) and gave several keynote lectures in Europe (Geneva, Paris) regarding her current project Jet Age Aesthetics: The Glamour of Media in Motion and participated in a study day on Life organized by the Princeton Art Museum where she spoke about color in the work of photographer Ernst Haas. With Daniela Bleichmar, she directed the Mellon Sawyer Seminar, “Visual History: The Past in Pictures.”


Ann Marie Yasin was awarded an Advancing Scholarship in the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Grant from the Provost’s office for 2017-18 for her project, “Roman Timescapes: Architecture and Temporality in the Imperial City, 1st c. BCE-6th c. CE.”
Emily Anderson (Art History) was awarded a Decorative Arts Trust Summer Research award for her dissertation research in the UK in summer 2017.


Sanders Bernstein (English) received a Provost’s Mentored Teaching Fellowship for 2017-18.

Jonathan Dentler (History) engaged in six months of research in Europe and New York with the support of the Mellon-USC Digital Humanities Fellowship and has been a visiting fellow at the Hagley Research Center in Delaware.

Lauren Dodds (Art History) received a Ph.D. Fellowship from the USC-Huntington Early Modern Studies Institute for 2017-18.

Amanda Kennell (East Asian Languages and Cultures, graduating summer 2017) is off to England to take up a Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Fellowship at the University of East Anglia via the auspices of the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures.

Peter Labuza (Cinematic Arts, Critical Studies) has a forthcoming article in the next issue of *The Velvet Light Trap* (Fall 2017) titled “Putting Penn to Paper: Warner Bros.’s Contract Governance and the Transition to New Hollywood.” He also received a fellowship to participate in the German Historical Archival Summer School in Chicago, Boston and Washington, D.C. with Ph.D. students from various international universities.

Randall Meissen (History) was awarded the Del Amo grant for summer 2017.

Darshana Mini (Cinematic Arts, Critical Studies) was awarded a Research Enhancement Fellowship by USC in 2017 as well as a Library Research Award, a Society and Media Studies Student Writing Award (Third Position), and a Phi Kappa Phi Student Recognition Award. She published “The Spectral Duration of Malayalam Soft-porn: Disappearance, Desire and Haunting” in *Bioscope: South Asian Screen Studies* (December 2016) and “Public Interest Television and Social Responsibility: The Search for the Missing Person in Indian Television” in *International Journal for Digital Television* (2016).

Joshua Mitchell (American Studies and Ethnicity) was awarded the 2017 James P. Danky Fellowship from the Wisconsin Historical Society and UW-Madison’s Center for the History of Print and Digital Culture.

Avigail Moss (Art History) was awarded a Provost’s Mentored Teaching Fellowship (2017-18). She also received a fellowship to attend the Victorian Society of America’s London Summer School in summer 2017.

Maria Francesca Piazzoni (Urban Planning and Development) was granted a Research Enhancement Fellowship by the Graduate School. She was the guest editor of a special issue of the *Journal of Architecture and Urbanism*, “Shanghai: A (Self)Portrait” (2017) and co-author of the editorial with the same title.
Alumni News

Nadya Bair started as a Postdoctoral Associate at Yale University’s Digital Humanities Lab on August 1. She will be working with the DH Lab team to visualize and construct network graphs around Magnum Photos and the business of photojournalism. She was also awarded the Kenneth J. Botto Research Fellowship at the Center for Creative Photography in Tucson for the spring of 2017. In their Summer 2017 issue, American Art published her article, “Their Daily Bread: American Sponsorship and Magnum Photos’ Global Network,” based on research conducted with the support of the VSRI, which she first presented at USC in her Anne Friedberg Memorial lecture.

Jennifer Black is Assistant Professor of History and Government (tenure-track) at Misericordia University, Dallas, PA. Her most recent publications include “Exchange Cards: Advertising, Album-making, and the Commodification of Sentiment in the Gilded Age,” in Winterthur Portfolio (2017) and “Citizenship and Caricature: Teaching the American Past with Images,” in Art & Public History: Approaches, Opportunities, and Challenges, edited by Rebecca Bush & K. Tawny Paul and published by Rowman & Littlefield (2017). She is the Network Editor In-Chief for H-Material Culture (https://networks.h-net.org/h-material-culture) and was awarded a City of Pittston “Proclamation” in Recognition of Outstanding Community Service with the Greater Pittston Historical Society (Pittston, PA).

Mark Braude, Lecturer in the departments of Art History, History, and French at Stanford University, is at work on his second book, The Invisible Emperor: Napoleon on Elba, under contract with Penguin Press. He was recently awarded a Public Scholar Grant from the NEH. His first book, Making Monte Carlo: A History of Speculation and Spectacle came out in paperback from Simon & Schuster last year.

Umayyah Cable continues in their appointment as Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the programs of Asian American Studies and Middle East and North African Studies at Northwestern University. Last spring they were invited to give a talk at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as part of the Global Terrain of Free Speech Conflicts Conference hosted by the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory. Umayyah was also recently awarded a faculty research grant from Northwestern’s Graduate School as well as a grant from the Office of Undergraduate Research, which provides funds to hire and mentor a student.

Catherine Clark, who was recently promoted to Associate Professor of French Studies at MIT, is a 2017-2018 fellow in the School of Historical Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, where she will be working on a book project about the French interest in the People’s Republic of China after 1949. Her article “The Commercial Street Photographer: The Right to the Street and the Droit à l’Image in Post-1945 France” appeared in the August 2017 issue of the Journal of Visual Culture, and she is under contract with Oxford University Press for her book Paris and the Cliché of History: The City and Photographs, 1860-1970.

Jason Hill is in his third year as Assistant Professor of Art History at the University of Delaware. His book, Artist as Reporter: Weegee, Ad Reinhardt, and the PM News Picture, was awarded a 2016 CAA Wyeth Foundation Book Grant and will be published by University of California Press in January 2018. His essay “‘Noise Abatement Zone: John Divola’s Photographic Fulcrum,” recently appeared in Before-and-After Photography: Histories and Contexts, edited by Kate Palmer Albers and Jordan Bear and published by Bloomsbury. He has delivered several recent papers, including “Collision: Photography, Automobile, and Media in Weegee’s New York,” at the tri-annual conference of the International Association of Word and Image Studies in Lausanne, Switzerland, and, at a colloquium on LIFE magazine’s photography organized by the Princeton University Art Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, a meditation on LIFE’s sometimes thrilling but usually quite dull picture gathering procedures entitled “Miracles versus The Hard Way.” With Thierry Gervais, Jason is presently
co-organizing the conference “Photography: The Black Box of History” to be held at the Ryerson Image Center in Toronto in March 2018. He also continues his work coordinating a working group addressing the material culture of media at the University of Delaware.


**Laura Kalba** was promoted to Associate Professor of Art History at Smith College in 2016. She published *Color in the Age of Impressionism: Commerce, Technology and Art* (Penn State University Press, 2017), which was selected as a “Public Pick” in the online journal *Public Books*, 2017. She was awarded the Frederick Burkhardt Residential Fellowship for Recently Tenured Scholars, American Council of Learned Societies, for her new book project, *Currencies: Symbolism and Signification in the Golden Age of Finance Capital*, 2018-19.

**Chera Kee** was recently promoted (with tenure) to Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies in the Department of English at Wayne State University. Her new book, *Not Your Average Zombie: Rehumanizing the Undead from Voodoo to Zombie Walks*, is now available from the University of Texas Press (Sept. 2017). She was also a co-collaborator on the project, *Dividing the Kingdoms: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Teaching King Lear*, which was awarded an NEH micro-grant through the Folger Shakespeare Library. Her current research explores the role of intertextuality in meaning-making and community maintenance in *Star Wars* fandoms.

**Anca Lasc**, Assistant Professor of History of Art and Design, Pratt Institute, has a forthcoming publication *Architectures of Display: Department Stores and Modern Retail*, co-edited with Patricia Lara Betancourt and Margaret Maile Petty from Routledge in September 2017.

**Ryan Linkof**, Associate Curator, Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, will publish a book based on his USC dissertation titled *Public Images: Celebrity, Photojournalism and the Making of the Tabloid Press* with Bloomsbury Publishing in February 2018. He also co-authored a collection book with LACMA’s Photography Department, *This is Not a Selfie: Photographic Self-Portraits from the Audrey and Sydney Irmas Collection* (2016).

**Katharine Wells** is an Assistant Professor of Art History at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. In summer of 2016, she had a fellowship at the Bard Graduate Center in New York, and this coming academic year she is a fellow at the Center for 21st Century Studies at UWM. Her book, *Weaving Modernism: Postwar Tapestry between Paris and New York*, is forthcoming from Yale University Press in spring 2019. She will be back in LA for CAA this coming February and will be chairing a panel called “Warp, Weft, World: Postwar Textiles and Transcultural Form.” This year she is also giving talks at SECAC and the Center for Craft, Creativity and Design.

**Former Postdoctoral Scholars**

**Victoria Cain** is an Assistant Professor of History at Northeastern University.

**Allan Doyle** was hired as Visiting Assistant Professor of Art and Art History at the University of Puget Sound.

**Jessica Keating** is an Assistant Professor of Art History at Carleton College.

**Justin Underhill** is a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Digital Humanities at UC Berkeley.